

# Ex-Post Evaluation of Community Care and Personal Care Skills Course for the Community Employment Network Support Services

## ***Background***

The Community Care and Personal Care Skills Course came about as a result of close inter-agency work between FAS, BAP, AEC and the Daughters of Charity through their presence in the CE Network Board of Management. It was primarily established with the dual aims of progressing people into 'open employment' or further training in the respective field itself. A training needs analysis in Blanchardstown identified the requirement for the course itself. Each client was required to attend two separate work experience placements, one pre and after Christmas. The course ran for twenty-eight weeks in total.

## ***Original Status of Participants***

Of the twenty participants who enrolled on the course most were primarily drawn from CE Projects in Blanchardstown. According to the previous evaluation <sup>1</sup> conducted by an independent consultant on behalf of BAP, three CE participants held non-caring positions on their respective Projects, eight held caring positions whereas the final five participants from Finglas area also held caring roles in one capacity or another. In other words all were participating in 'supported employment' posts with the back up of the CE Co-ordinator or CENSS. It will become apparent in the main body of the report that the support provided by the CENSS was pivotal in progressing people in 'open employment' upon completion of their courses and placements.

The **aim and objectives** of the *original evaluation* were to

- Establish whether the original course meet the needs and expectations of the different stakeholders
- Access whether the course was value for money
- Evaluate the impact of the CENSS in establishing the course
- Outline lessons learnt from the course

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<sup>1</sup> Keelin O'Reilly,

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the multi agency approach to working with CE clients to meet their training needs
- To examine if the model applied to the organisation of the course should be used again

In contrast, and based upon the guidance of the Community Employment Co-ordinator, for Blanchardstown, the **objectives** of this *ex-post evaluation*<sup>2</sup> were somewhat different.

- To establish if the level of 'after care support' meet the expectations of the former CE participants
- What additional 'after care supports' would be helpful in the event of another identical course being run again
- To determine how the former trainees rated the training and the qualification
- To determine whether the people concerned were in employment
- Finally to establish had former clients sourced employment primarily via their own initiative or with the support of the CE Supervisor

## **Methodology**

It was decided that the best angle would initially be to post out a letter attached to a short questionnaire. On the covering letter, everybody was invited to participate in the evaluation by either filling in the questionnaire or contacting the evaluator and airing his or her opinions over the telephone. This additional option was provided not only to ensure a higher response rate but also because it was felt that some people might have had issues around filling in a form. To compound matters most people who attended the course had no phone installed in their houses and some had changed address in the meantime. In reality it subsequently materialised that it was necessary for the evaluator to take the initiative, phone individuals and interview them over the phone. Eventually eight individuals were contacted out of sixteen ensuring a 50% response rate. Therefore it can be assumed that the findings are reflective of those who choose also not to participate in the survey. It should be borne in mind that it was eighteen months since the course finished. Naturally some people in their mindsets had 'moved on' or

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<sup>2</sup> Ex-Post Evaluations are normally conducted a couple of years after the programme/initiative has ceased to discern actual longer-term impacts (outcomes). Initial follow up course evaluations often just reveal the short-term impact (results).

progressed and did not want to necessarily want to associate with a survey, which might remind themselves of a period in their lives they may not have had fond memories of.

## **Findings**

**Are you happy with the level of follow up support you received since finishing the course?**

Yes 5                      No 1                      2 Did not indicate but commented

*"I have found the course very useful"*

*"It helped me to take up other courses, such as carer's course"*

*"Got the cert, no follow up"*

*"I am currently in full time employment so I have not received any follow up support since finishing the course"*

**Are there any additional supports that would have helped you since you finished the course?**

Yes 3                      No 5

*"The course was very good"*

*'The position was evaluated a few months down the line after the course had finished, the supervisor rings you to find out how your doing'*

*'Felt that I could have gotten more support from the CE Supervisor. Thrown in at the deep end'*

Another person indicated *"I would like to go on to do more training in a specific area.(The education of children with special needs in mainstream school"*

**Is there any element of the programme that could be improved to make it easier for others to follow on from you?**

Yes 2

No 5

1 no indication

*"Nothing can be hard as long as you are with a group. I found it was worth all the effort to further my education"*

*"There were a couple of speakers which I felt were boring and hard to listen to. (first aid) Nutrition (common sense)"*

**What is your status now?**

Six people indicated that they were working full time and two part time. However three of these had also been signing on the live register. This seems to be a contradiction in itself. ?

*"I am currently employed as special needs assistant in Huntstown Primary School"*

*"Just got a job working for the Health Board"*

*"Family support worker with the EHB"*

*"Youth Worker"*

*"Family support worker with the EHB"*

*"I am now working part time, with the Carers Association 5 days a week"*

*"Employed part time with the NAHB doing home help"*

Another person claimed that she left the course before the Christmas break because it was not well run. However she had been encouraged to go for an interview for a full time placement with St Michael's.

**If you are employed how did you actually find the job? Was it through the CE Supervisor, LES, FAS, your own initiative mainly, other?**

*"I got my job, through the CE Supervisor, also I .. finishing my CE Employment, I had a choice of two jobs, I choose the one I'm in"*

*"CE Network Training Programme"*

*"The Supervisor in Corduff Resource Centre got me onto the Full Time Job Initiative where I am working with the youth of Corduff"*

*"Social Worker"*

*"Got the job on my own initiative mostly" Cathy McLoughlin did contact her re: the post from newspaper advert"*

*"Yes! I started work in the school on CE, which led to a full time position"*

*"Own initiative"*

**Looking back how would you rate the qualification and the training you received?**

Excellent 5

Good 2

*"Without the Core Skills, I don't think I would have been able to face a harder course, I feel I done well for my age, however I'm happy with a good job and very good certificate of I want to move on" "My opinion to Participants in CE is go for Core Skills, if it comes their way, as I think its one of the best courses on CE".*

*“All the training was excellent”*

*“I enjoyed the course and felt I learned quite a lot but personally I felt that a lot of it was over simplified. It was geared too much towards hospital and institutional work.”*

One person whilst they felt that the course was excellent thought that some people were only doing the course because otherwise they fear that they'll lost their benefits”

### **Conclusions**

In terms of progressing people into mainstream 'open employment' the course has evidently been a clear success. All eight people who responded to the survey either over the telephone or via the postal questionnaire were employed. More impressively this was more than a year after the course had been completed. This is an extremely high progression figure and would be far higher than similar organised labour market orientated courses. Importantly everyone with the exception of just one person appeared pleased with his or her new work venue.

The existence of the CENSS was critical to the courses successful placement ratio. **Five out the eight indicated that it was 'directly' with the support of the CENNS** that they managed to secure employment. Of the remainder one found employment by her own initiative, another with the support of a social worker and the final person also on her own initiative but had received a follow up call from the CE Co-ordinator to draw her attention to the job advert.

As with any course where there is a mix of individuals certain people will naturally be more motivated than their peers or better suited to the course. Not surprisingly this appeared to have been the case with a couple of participants somewhat frustrated at the pace of the course delivery.

The majority of people however appeared very satisfied with the course delivery albeit some minor improvements. Certain aspects could be 'tightened up' on, such as, punctuality, prompt feedback by tutors to course participants and discipline. One person did comment that they found one of the speakers boring and hard to follow. The final qualification was prized by

individuals but was not universally recognised in all the work arenas people found themselves e.g. St Michael's. This however *did not* exclude people from subsequent employment.

With the exception of a couple of people most were generally satisfied with the follow up support service they received since completing their course. Some dissatisfaction sprang somewhat from the fact that the course may not necessarily have been tailored enough for the eventual preferred work venues of two people e.g. special needs and one person stated that she felt left to her own devices upon receiving the certificate. Apart from the above issues most were contented.

### ***Recommendations***

The follow up support provided by the CENSS was shown to be a critical feature of the courses overall success. This should be built upon and if necessary additional resources or support provided towards this aspect of the service.

With a shortage of carers in the wider community the course has demonstrated itself to be an efficient way of training people up and progressing them into this chosen employment field. Serious consideration should be given to re-running a second course in the near future to meet demand for carers in the community.

Should the various parties decide to re-run the course it would be beneficial as an exercise to bring along one or two previous course attendees to share their experiences with any new participants for an afternoon's session.

From a gender proofing perspective the CENSS should try and encourage more men to examine whether this course offers them real employment options. Out of the original twenty people selected to attend the course only one man came forward. He was offered a place but then had to withdraw due to illness.

The tutors must enforce course guidelines more rigorously.

The selection criteria of possible candidates onto any potential course might need to be re-examined and more clearly defined.

